
HEALTH DEPARTMENT
NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Shingles Vaccine Available for Many Uninsured, Underinsured

GRAND RAPIDS – Ask any adult who has suffered from shingles, and they will tell you it is an extremely painful experience. The virus causes a painful skin rash that, even though it heals within two to four weeks, can cause nerve pain that lasts for months. Anyone who had chickenpox is at risk. But there is help: Zostavax, a vaccine, can protect at-risk adults over the age of 50 from this painful virus.

Thanks to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, more than 200 doses of vaccine is available to certain adults who are uninsured or underinsured. Typically, the Kent County Health Department provides this one-time vaccination for \$197. While supplies last, persons 60 years and up without insurance or those with insurance that does not cover vaccines (under-insured) can get the vaccination for the cost of the vaccination administrative fee. (The administrative fee, based on a sliding scale, tops out at \$23.) This would include those seniors without Medicare Part D.

“The CDC recommends people 60 years of age or older should get shingles vaccine,” says Adam London, Administrative Health Officer of the Kent County Health Department. “Studies show that almost every American 40 years of age and up had chickenpox at some point, even if they don't remember getting it. Because the varicella-zoster virus lays dormant in your system, you can develop shingles without any warning signs.”

Some people should not get the shingles vaccine:

- Those who experienced a life-threatening or severe allergic reaction to gelatin, the antibiotic neomycin, or any other component of shingles vaccine. Share any severe allergies with your health care provider.
- Those with weakened immune systems because of HIV/AIDS, or who have been treated with drugs that affect the immune system (i.e. steroids, radiation or chemotherapy)
- Anyone who has been diagnosed with cancer affecting the bone marrow or lymphatic system, such as leukemia or lymphoma.
- Women who are or might be pregnant.

To find out if you are eligible for the vaccine, call us at 616.632.7200. Vaccinations are by appointment only, and available at any of our four clinic locations.

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KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931. The Health Department is home to nearly 260 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates one main clinic and three satellite clinics located in Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit www.accesskent.com/health.

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